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HERBERT SPENCER'S PHILOSOPHY.

BY DR. LEWIS G. JANES.

While the article of Dr. Carus on "Spencerian Agnosticism," in *The Open Court* of September 17th, is of interest as clearing up some possible misunderstandings of his own position, on the main point at issue between objective monism and that form of agnosticism which appears to its advocates to be the only logical outcome of modern philosophical thought, Dr. Carus's statement seems to be an explanation which does not explain.

While I have no desire to prolong the controversy, or to weary the readers of *The Open Court* by the reiteration of the positions taken in my former article, a clear understanding of the question at issue, and justice to Mr. Spencer, seem to require a brief reply to Dr. Carus As to Mr. Spencer's position, I prefer to permit him to speak in his own language, in passages selected from his published works. By reference to such passages as most clearly represent his agnostic attitude and his anti-materialistic philosophy, I hope to show that his position does not essentially differ from my own as set forth in the article on "Philosophical Agnosticism and Monism"; that his agnosticism is a natural and logical deduction from the dictum of modern psychology respecting the nature of our knowledge, and that his anti-materialistic position is clearly defined and logically maintained. First, however, permit me a brief word in reply to Dr. Carus's comments on my previous article.

Commencing with the confession that he does not know what I mean by the innermost, intrinsic and essential nature of reality, he proceeds to affirm what I have never denied—that "the representation of reality in thought-symbols *is* knowledge." Undoubtedly it is knowledge; but of what? Of the thought-symbols, of course; this, and nothing more. And these thought-symbols by Dr. Carus's own clear definition, quoted in my previous article, are "mere abstractions" to look upon which as realities "is a self-mystification." When he affirms in the note, (p. 2948) that "mental as well as material processes, in my opinion *are* realities," I confess to a mystification on my part which is in no degree enlightened by the additional explanation that "they are no realities if considered by themselves as abstract ideas." Consider them how you will, as "processes" or as "abstract ideas," they are disparate and dual. If "mental and material processes *are* realities" then reality is not one but dual. This assertion of Dr. Carus's is the logical negation of Monism.

But perhaps my critic meant to assert, not that "*mental and material* processes are realities," but that the actual process which appears in our consciousness on the one hand as mental and on the other as material, under the necessary interpretation of our thought-symbols, is a reality. If so, my question is again to the point: What is the *nature* of this process, regarded as monistic, apart from its symbolical mental and material interpretations?

In further confirmation of the agnostic position, asserted by myself, moreover, Dr. Carus finally confesses, (p. 2955): "The term 'reality' means nothing but actual being and *cannot give us any information about the innermost nature of being.*" This is precisely what the agnostic claims. The "particular qualities of reality," i. e. its modes of affecting our finite consciousness, can be definitely described and defined. Its innermost nature, however, is incapable of definition. The fact that the objective monist "*can see no use*" in forming a concept of "the innermost, essential and intrinsic nature of reality as a whole" does not imply that Reality possesses no intrinsic character apart from its modes of affecting our consciousness; it implies rather that the mind of the objective monist *ceases to think* just as this particular phase of the problem comes in view, and that his agnosticism is therefore implicit merely, though no less actual; while that of the Spencerian is clearly thought out, explicit and frankly confessed. The realms of admitted knowability of the Monist and the Spencerian are identical and coextensive. No possibility of thought and investigation which is open to the former is closed to the latter. The Spencerian, however, perceives that parallel and co-ordinate with the infinite realm of relative knowledge which symbolically interprets the effects of Reality in dual and disparate terms of mental and material processes to our finite consciousness, lies an infinite realm of Reality in its essential, intrinsic constitution, which the finite mind can never penetrate. Yet there are not two infinites, but one and the same infinite Reality. The idea of modes of existence which are "ab-

solutely unknowable" to the finite mind is, therefore, not abandoned by the disclaimer that agnosticism implies the assertion of the unknowability of reality *per se*. If the perception of this truth is indeed a "bottomless abyss," as Dr. Carus declares, which "impels man to stop thinking," the only difference between the objective Monist and the Spencerian agnostic is that the former stops thinking before he reaches the edge of the abyss, and plunges blindly in, while the agnostic clearly sees it before him, and declines to attempt the hopeless task of fathoming its unsearchable depths. That the agnostic conception implies a profound mystery at the heart of Being I have nowhere denied. With Mr. Spencer and Mr. Fiske I confess that I can see no complete solution of this mystery while finite consciousness endures. What I did affirm and hereby reaffirm is that the *doctrine* of the Unknowable does not rest upon any "mystery"—any supernaturalist or metaphysical basis, for its explanation,—but is a logical deduction from the simplest demonstrated facts of psychological science.

This doctrine as asserted by Mr. Spencer rests primarily upon "the antithesis of subject and object, never to be transcended while consciousness lasts."* Precisely here I have rested it in my own argument. In "First Principles," additional arguments, based on the well-sustained claim that this is "the deepest, widest, and most certain of all facts,"—a fact in which science unites with philosophy and religion in recognising,—and supported by the considerations deduced by Sir William Hamilton and Dean Mansel from the nature of mind and consciousness, are brought forward in its support. Finally, from the nature of Life itself as the continued adjustment of inner-relations to outer relations, the necessary relativity of our knowledge is argued, and the actuality and reality of the Unknowable is maintained against those writers who claim that the words "Infinite" and "Absolute" express merely negative ideas. But it is in the "Principles of Psychology," where the nature of mind and knowledge is expressly treated, that the clearest statements of the fundamental principles of Spencerian agnosticism are to be found.

In the section entitled "The Physical Synthesis," (Principles of Psychology, Vol. i, pp. 616–627.) Mr. Spencer fairly states the position of the Materialist, the Spiritualist, and of that yet more refined school of thought which makes Motion the supreme reality underlying all mental activities, and shows why neither of these views is illustrative of his own philosophical position. The passage continues (§ 272):

"Comparatively consistent as is this answer, and serving though it does to throw back with added force the reproaches of the spiritualist, it is not the answer to be here given. In the closing paragraphs of 'First Principles,' and again in the earlier parts of the present work, the position was taken, that the truth is not expressible either by materialism or by spiritualism, however modified and however refined. Let me now, for the last time, set forth the ultimate implications of the argument running through this volume as well as through preceding volumes.

"Carried to whatever extent, the inquiries of the psychologist do not reveal the ultimate nature of mind; any more than do the inquiries of the chemist reveal the ultimate nature of matter, or those of the physicist the ultimate nature of motion. Though the chemist is gravitating towards the belief that there is a primitive atom, out of which by variously-arranged unions are formed the so-called elements, as out of these by variously-arranged unions are formed oxides, acids, and salts, and the multitudinous more complex substances; yet he knows no more than he did at first about this hypothetical primitive atom. And similarly, though we have seen reason for thinking that there is a primitive unit of consciousness, that sensations of all orders are formed of such units combined in various relations, that by the compounding of these sensations and their various relations are produced perceptions and ideas and so on up to the highest thoughts and emotions; yet this unit of consciousness remains inscrutable. Suppose it to have become quite clear that a shock in consciousness and a molecular motion, are the subjective and objective faces of the same thing; we continue utterly incapable of uniting the two, *so as to conceive that reality of which they are the opposite faces.** Let us consider how either face is framed in our thoughts.

"The conception of a rhythmically moving mass of sensible matter is a synthesis of certain states of consciousness that stand related in a certain succession. The conception of a rhythmically moving molecule, is one in which these states and their relations have been reduced to the extremest limits of dimension representable to the mind, and are then assumed to be further reduced far beyond the limits of representation. So that this rhythmically moving molecule, which is our unit of composition of external phenomena, is mental in a three-fold sense—our experiences of a rhythmically moving mass, whence the conception of it is derived, are states of mind, having objective counterparts that are unknown; the derived conception of a rhythmically moving molecule, is formed of states of mind that have no directly-presented objective counterparts at all; and when we try to think of the rhythmically moving molecule as we suppose it to exist, we do so by imagining that we have re-represented these representative states, on an infinitely reduced scale. So that the unit out of which we build our interpretation of material phenomena, is triply ideal.

"On the other hand, what do we think of this ideal unit, considered as a portion of mind? It arises, as we have seen, by synthesis of many feelings, real and ideal, and of the many changes among them. What are feelings? What is changed? And what changes it? If to avoid obvious implications of materiality, we call each element of this ideal unit, a state of consciousness, we only get into similar implications. The conception of a state of consciousness implies the conception of an existence which has the state. When in decomposing certain of our feelings we find them formed of minute shocks,† succeeding one another with different rapidities and in different combinations; and when we conclude that all our feelings are probably formed of such units of consciousness variously combined, we are still obliged to conceive of this unit of consciousness as a change wrought by some force in something. No effort of the imagination enables us to think of a shock, however minute, except as undergone by an entity. We are compelled, therefore, to postulate a substance of mind that is affected, before we can think of its affections. But we can form no

* "Principles of Psychology," Vol. i. p. 62. (English Edition.)

* See my similar argument, *The Open Court*, Sept. 17, p. 2948.

† The word "shock," certainly in Mr. Spencer's use of it, does not imply materiality.

notion of a substance of mind absolutely divested of attributes connoted by the word substance; and all such attributes are abstracted from our experiences of material phenomena. Expel from the conception of mind every one of those attributes by which we distinguish an external something from an external nothing, and the conception of mind becomes nothing. If to escape this difficulty we repudiate the expression 'state of consciousness' and call each undecomposable feeling 'a consciousness,' we merely get out of one difficulty into another. A consciousness if not the state of a thing is itself a thing. And as many different consciousnesses as there are, so many different things there are. How shall we think of these so many independent things, having their differential characters, when we have excluded all conceptions derived from external phenomena? We can think of entities which differ from one another and from nonentity, only by bringing into our thoughts the remembrances of entities which we distinguished as objective and material. Again, how are we to conceive these consciousnesses as either being changed one into another or as being replaced one by another? We cannot do this without conceiving of cause; and we know nothing of cause save as manifested in existences we class as material—either our own bodies or surrounding things.

"See then our predicament. We can think of matter only in terms of mind. We can think of mind only in terms of matter. When we have pushed our explorations of the first to the uttermost limit, we are referred to the second for a final answer; and when we have got the final answer of the second we are referred back to the first for an interpretation of it. We find the value of x in terms of y; then we find the value of y in terms of x; and so on we may continue forever without coming nearer to a solution. *The antithesis of subject and object, never to be transcended while consciousness lasts, renders impossible all knowledge of that Ultimate Reality in which subject and object are united.*

"And this brings us to the true conclusion implied throughout the foregoing pages,—the conclusion that *it is one and the same Ultimate Reality which is manifested to us subjectively and objectively*. For while the nature of that which is manifested under either form proves to be inscrutable, the order of its manifestations throughout all mental phenomena proves to be the same as the order of its manifestations throughout all material phenomena."

This somewhat lengthy passage, I think, shows clearly, (1) the irrefragable psychological foundation of philosophical agnosticism in the antithesis of subject and object, "never to be transcended while consciousness lasts"; (2) the anti-materialistic character of Mr. Spencer's psychology; and (3) the monistic foundation on which his entire philosophy is based: "it is one and the same Ultimate Reality which is manifested to us subjectively and objectively."

Those critics who persist in asserting that Mr. Spencer's philosophy is materialistic in its implications constantly ignore the fact that he everywhere affirms that the reality underlying what we conceive as matter and motion can by no means be identical with matter and motion, but must be something essentially different. Importing into their own and his thought the ordinary conceptions of matter and motion, they find no difficulty in showing how absurd is the incongruity when consciousness is supposed to emerge from them.

If they would keep constantly in view the fact that Mr. Spencer regards the Ultimate Reality as one; as something entirely different from matter and motion as we conceive them; as so much higher in its nature than even the highest manifestations of human consciousness that it transcends consciousness "as much as consciousness transcends a plant's functions," then they would perceive how futile and unfair is an argument based upon the ordinary materialistic conceptions of matter and motion. To no careful and sympathetic student of Mr. Spencer, however, is such a misapprehension possible.

THE CASE OF AGNOSTICISM REVISED.

We freely concur with Dr. Lewis G. Janes in the main point on which he so vigorously insists, that Mr. Herbert Spencer's philosophy is not "materialistic in its implications," for undoubtedly it is agnostic. According to Mr. Spencer, the underlying reality is and remains unknowable. Dr. Janes, however, goes too far, when he characterises Mr. Spencer's philosophy as anti-materialistic. His position is not anti-materialistic, but non-materialistic. According to the agnostic principles, we do not know anything about "the reality underlying what we conceive as matter and motion," it might be spirit, it might be matter, it might be anything natural, yet it might be something of which we have no notion, it might be something that is not found in the realm of nature, it might be supernatural.

1. MR. ELLIS THURTELL'S AGNOSTICISM.

Dr. Janes is not satisfied with my explanation, because it does not explain the main point at issue between monism and agnosticism. But the trouble with agnosticism is that it is a Proteus constantly changing under our hands. Mr. Herbert Spencer's philosophy admits of many interpretations. Whom have we to accept as the orthodox Spencerian, Professor Fiske or Mr. Ellis Thurtell? Mr. Ellis Thurtell comments in *The Agnostic Journal*, (xxix, 12) September 19, 1891, upon the discussion of agnosticism which appeared in *The Open Court*, No. 207, saying that he wants to know Dr. Janes's own construction of "living in the spirit." He says:

"It would be a most remarkable thing if so representative a Spencerian as the President of the Brooklyn Ethical Association seems to be, had any ardent yearnings toward the supernaturalistic short-cut of theological lore. . . ."

I do not see that Dr. Janes's and Professor Fiske's position can be characterised as a yearning toward supernaturalism or theology. Nevertheless, their interpretation of Spencerianism differs widely from that of Mr. Ellis Thurtell. The latter is by no means ready to accept their view of Spencerianism. He says:

"Herbert Spencer is perpetually, throughout his various volumes, impressing upon his many misunderstanding readers that his implications are neither necessarily Materialistic nor necessarily

Spiritualistic, and that the strife between Materialist and Spiritualist is substantially a war of words. Quite unequivocal are his continuous statements that it is immaterial in which of these two terms of thought we choose to express our conceptions of mind and matter; that, in point of fact, the terms of both *Materialistic and Spiritualistic* thought are merely symbols, such as those of algebra, for the expression of what is, in the last resort, a reality unknown, if not, indeed, unknowable as well. Herbert Spencer is most evidently *agnostic* on this point. It is to his mind as much beyond the present scope of human knowledge as is the *question of the ultimate causation of the universe itself.*

"These clearly and strongly put views of our great philosopher are to be found not only in an earlier edition of his works, but also in the very latest, which, in its entirety, is now before me. This fact, together with the equally indisputable one of Dr. Fiske having built up a certain far from Agnostic theory called 'Cosmic Theism,' may serve to cast some doubt upon the importance of what Dr. Fiske himself is said to have revealed to the assembled company on this eventful evening. The revelation was nothing less than the assertion that Herbert Spencer had confessed, in 1874, to a change of opinion upon the 'Correlation of Forces' question, and had acquiesced in the construction Dr. Fiske had placed upon his philosophy as a whole. With every respect for the author of 'Cosmic Philosophy,' it seems to me that, failing any positive written statement from Herbert Spencer upon the precise point at issue, we should all do well to content ourselves with the exposition of his views, so lucidly and (as I think) so consistently set forth in the fifth edition of 'First Principles,' and in the third edition of 'Principles of Psychology,'" both published during last year. Upon the authority of these volumes, I submit that both Dr. Janes and Dr. Fiske have, in some measure, misrepresented the matured views of our great philosopher of Agnosticism and Evolution, and that Herbert Spencer has neither changed the base of his philosophy, by putting into the background the principle of 'Persistence of Force,' nor has repudiated, with his latest breath, any one of the assertions contained in the passages quoted by the Spiritualist from New York."

Before I proceed to discuss Dr. Janes's position and the passage quoted by him from Mr. Spencer, I have to make a few comments on Mr. Ellis Thurtell's proposition. We maintain in opposition to Mr. Herbert Spencer's or anybody's agnosticism, that knowledge means description in mental symbols and reality can be described in mental symbols. Reality is not unknowable. And we maintain at the same time that the different problems of causation are by no means beyond the present scope of human knowledge. Mr. Thurtell speaks of "the question of the ultimate causation of the universe." Does that mean how the universe originated out of nothing? That question is answered by the law of the conservation of matter and energy. The universe did not originate out of nothing; it is eternal. The term "eternal" means that it exists, that it has existed, and that it will exist; it has never been created out of nothing and can never disappear into nothing.

By the bye, I cannot approve of such word-combinations as "ultimate causation." To speak of causation as "ultimate" implies at the start a lack of clearness concerning the meaning of "cause" and must necessarily implicate us in inextricable contradictions.

The recent discussion of the Brooklyn Ethical Association grew hottest concerning the question: What is the corner-stone of Mr. Spencer's philosophy, the correlation of forces, or the doctrine of the relativity of knowledge? Mr. Spencer has repeatedly spoken of sensations, emotions, and thoughts as being transformed motion; yet on other occasions he has also expressed the view that mind and matter are opposite faces of one and the same unknowable reality. Now it was maintained by the disputants, that if these two "faces." could not be transformed the one into the other, Mr. Spencer would have to give up his doctrine of the correlation of forces.

Let us stop here. The correlation of forces cannot be given up either by Mr. Spencer or by any one. The doctrine of the correlation of forces is not specifically Spencerian or agnostic, or positivistic, or monistic. It is common property. No sound thinker at the present age doubts that any one force is transformable into another. What Mr. Spencer and with him his followers, Professor Fiske included, will have to give up, is simply the idea that psychic states are shocks. Psychic states, i. e. feelings, are states of awareness; they are neither forces nor transformed forces.

Says Leibnitz:

"We are constrained to confess that perception and whatever depends upon it, are inexplainable upon mechanical principles; that is by reference to forms and movements. If we could imagine a machine the operation of which would manufacture thoughts, feelings, and perceptions, and could think of it as enlarged in all its proportions, so that we could go into it as into a mill, even then we would find in it nothing but particles jostling each other, and never anything by which perception could be explained."

If we could go into the brain, we should see blood rushing through nervous structures, we should see certain parts of the latter, receiving the blood, oxydise and thus change its potential energy into kinetic energy. Our cicerone, supposing we had some one who knew all about it, might point out the different spots where feelings are taking place, and yet we should see no feelings. We should only see "particles jostling each other." And why? Because feelings are not motions. Feelings are not objective processes, they are subjective processes, they are not visible, they are not observable. They can only be felt, for they are states of awareness.

How we think subject and object as one, has been explained in other places and need not be discussed here. (See "The Soul of Man" pp. 1–46.)

Sensations in one sense are transformed force. By "sensation" we generally understand a physiological process which in some part is accompanied with feeling. The physiological process of a sensation is a breaking down of nervous substance, it is the setting free of a certain amount of potential energy. As such

it is mechanical. But the feeling of the sensation is not mechanical. A sensation in so far as we consider it as a special kind of feeling, a feeling of sight, or a sound, a taste or an odor is *not* transformed force. By feeling we understand that state of awareness which appears while a certain kind and amount of nerve-substance is being disturbed through some irritation. The physiological process is a shock; the psychical state is no shock, it is simply awareness.

Concerning the non-interconvertibility of feeling and motion, Professor Fiske and Dr. Janes cannot be said to have, as Mr. Thurtell declares, in some measure misrepresented Mr. Spencer's views; they have simply tried with a friendly hand to eliminate the consequences of a mistake.

II. DR. LEWIS G. JANES'S AGNOSTICISM.

Dr. Lewis G. Janes's agnosticism is based upon the idea that knowledge, being the representation of reality in thought-symbols, is a knowledge of the thought-symbols and nothing more. This is a fundamental error, that calls for explanation and refutation.

"Knowledge is the representation of reality in thought-symbols" means that some process affects a sentient being and causes a physiological disturbance together with which a definite state of awareness arises. There is a tree from which innumerable rays of light proceed. The tree is different from the picture on the retina, and again the picture on the retina (the latter being to some extent a chemical process) is different from the disturbance caused in the cortical centre of vision. This disturbance again considered purely as a physiological process is different from the state of awareness which accompanies the process. Yet all these events preserve a certain something in their forms which they have in common and so the feeling element in the sensation of a tree comes to represent the tree. The representative value of a feeling is called its contents. Every kind of sense-impression is followed by a special kind of feeling and thus the world around us is mapped out in feelings. Ideas, abstract thoughts, concepts are higher kinds of representative feelings. They are symbols which represent whole groups or generalisations i. e. composites of many similar feelings.

Now we ask again with Dr. Janes, What is knowledge? We answer and so does he: Knowledge is the representation of reality in thought-symbols. Dr. Janes proceeds to ask, "Knowledge; but of what? Of the thought-symbols, of course; this and nothing more." Here is a mistake. No man has a direct knowledge of his thought-symbols as being thought-symbols. Every state of awareness is an awareness of the contents of that state; and we assume that the contents of each state of awareness depends upon the special form of the action that takes place in some nerve-structure. Popularly speaking, feeling beings are not aware of their physiological brain activity, but of the purport and meaning of their physiological brain activity alone. No one seeing a tree and thinking of it is aware of or has a knowledge of a thought-symbol. Every one seeing a tree and thinking of it, is aware of and knows a certain contents of a thought-symbol of his which we call a tree; he is aware of the tree itself. That the means through which a man knows a tree is the symbolism of sensations and the activity of nervous structures, re-constructing in some way the picture of a tree in feeling substance, is not at all immediate knowledge; on the contrary, it is the result of most difficult and subtle investigations.

Sensations and thought-symbols are realities just as much as any other processes of nature; and the objects represented in thought-symbols are, if true, also realities. There are some thought-symbols which represent certain qualities or features abstracted in thought from objects; they are called abstracts. Such abstracts are matter, motion, spirit, etc. The qualities represented in abstracts are real also. They exist in and with things. But abstracts have not an existence by themselves. There is no absolute motion and there is no gravity outside of gravitating bodies. Indeed all things, (ourselves included) are such as they are only in connection with the whole universe. Every single object is inseparable from the whole cosmos, and if we speak of a thing we separate it in our thought from the rest of the world. This separation however is a fiction, which if persisted in, leads us to the absurd idea of things in themselves.

The whole universe is a vast system of relations, and these relations are reality itself. There is nothing unconditioned, nothing unrelated, nothing absolute. Everything real is, and necessarily must be, relative. A correct description of the relations of reality in the mind of a feeling being is knowledge. To say that we can know the relative, but cannot know the absolute or the unconditioned, is equivalent to saying that *we can know that which exists but we can never know that which does not exist.*

That which is or can be represented in our mental symbols, the contents of our sensations, i. e. of our sense-symbols, being that with which we have to deal in actual life, is generally called reality. Now we are told that beside it there is another reality which cannot be represented in mental symbols and which can neither directly nor indirectly affect man's consciousness. The former kind of reality is relative, the latter is absolute, the former can be comprehended the latter is incomprehensible and unthinkable. The former is the province of the sciences, commonly considered as nature, the latter is the innermost nature of reality, which "in

its essential, intrinsic constitution the finite* mind can never penetrate,"—"while consciousness lasts." We can understand reality as a whole, i. e. we can systematise our knowledge of the former in a unitary world-conception; yet we cannot understand the innermost nature of being. Says Dr. Janes:

"The mind of the objective monist *ceases to think* just as this particular phase of the problem comes in view and his agnosticism is therefore implicite merely, though no less actual."

The objective monist ceases to think that which according to the agnostic's statement is unthinkable and incomprehensible. Suppose but for a moment that this unthinkable kind of a reality did not exist and imagine that the former kind of reality, that which can be represented in sense-symbols and with which we have to deal in actual life existed alone, should we then not be able to have a clear monistic world conception without the superimposed additions of agnosticism? Indeed we can do without the supposition of a reality behind that which is usually called reality; and if we take our concepts of matter, motion, spirit, feeling, thought, etc., as symbolising certain features of nature, we need not furthermore ask for the innermost nature of reality as a whole.

Nature is nature; degrees of innermost-ness do not exist in Nature. Says Goethe:

"Natur hat weder Kern noch Schale,
Alles ist sie mit einem Male."

In a way similar to that of Dr. Janes on the innermost nature, Mr. Spencer speaks of the ultimate nature of things—of mind, of matter, of motion, etc. The ultimate nature is always said to be unknowable. What can the innermost or ultimate nature of a thing mean? It can mean the essential quality of a thing or a process. That however is not at all incapable of definition or incomprehensible. So for instance the essential quality of mind is symbolism; every mind is a system of representative symbols in feeling substance. The innermost and ultimate nature of something can also mean its most general quality. Thus, for instance, what is the most general quality of all matter? It is that which all kinds of matter have in common. Matter is that which directly or indirectly can affect any one of the senses. In either sense the innermost and ultimate natures of things are knowable. What other meaning the phrase can have I know not and am unable to surmise.

* Parenthetically I may state that the terms "finite mind," "finite consciousness," and also "infinite reality" are illegitimate word-combinations. (See *The Open Court*, No. 215, p. 2979.) Realities are always definite and concrete. The infinite and infinitude are not objects, but unlimited, unfinisbed, and not to be finished processes or possibilties. Every atom is infinite in certain respects. It has infinite possibilities of motion, of combination, etc. When we use such phrases as infinite reality or finite minds, we become naturally involved in a confused conception of things. The terms "infinite" and "absolute" are by no means "negative" ideas.

III. MR. HERBERT SPENCER'S AGNOSTICISM.

Dr. Janes quotes a long passage from Mr. Spencer's psychology which contains several strange misstatements and ends with the usual refrain of his *ergo ignorabimus*. Mr. Spencer artificially produces an inextricable confusion and concludes that all knowledge is impossible. I cannot enter here in a discussion concerning the possible meaning of "primitive atoms," or "primitive units of consciousness," or "the rhythmically moving molecule which is our unit of composition of external phenomena." Still less can I discuss Mr. Spencer's belief in "the substance of mind;" such a thing as "a substance of mind" is a meaningless and self-contradictory, a misleading, and therefore a dangerous phrase. Nor do I intend to investigate the old paralogism that "the conception of a state of consciousness implies the conception of an existence which has the state." This is the basis of the old ego-psychology which has been refuted a century ago by Hume, by Kant, and many others after Kant. I shall limit myself to the main point at issue. Mr. Spencer declares:

"We can think matter only in terms of mind and mind only in terms of matter. . . . . We find the value of x in terms of y; then we find the value of y in terms of x; and so on we may continue forever without coming nearer to a solution. *The antithesis of subject and object, never to be transcended while consciousness lasts, renders impossible all knowledge of that Ultimate Reality in which subject and object are united.*"

There is some truth in the statement, that "we can think matter only in terms of mind"; yet the word "term" is incorrect. We do not think matter in "terms" of mind, i. e. in expressions which denote mind, which characterise mind. We think matter in terms which characterise matter. We ought to say "matter as we think it," the idea "matter" is a mental symbol. This is a truism. Everything we think, is thought only in so far as it is put in mental symbols. This is true of matter and of motion, of possible and impossible things, of mind itself and of anything we can imagine, even that which for some reason or other is said to be inconceivable or, in case it contains self-contradictions, is actually inconceivable.

There is some truth also in the statement that "we can think mind only in terms of matter." Yet this statement also wants a correction. We can think mind only as being the mind of some real and material being. Or negatively expressed we cannot think of bodiless minds, of ghosts. Some people believe in ghosts and imagine they can think bodiless minds as realities. At any rate mind has to be thought, as everything else, in mental symbols and we can define it only in terms which denote mental or psychical processes.

Mr. Spencer in slightly altering these two truisms, (1) that the idea of matter is a mental symbol and (2) that the idea of mind must always be thought in connection with material bodies, produces an ingenious antithesis which hides a fallacy under the impression of profundity. In this way he enters into a vicious circle out of which he cannot escape. Finding himself hopelesly caught in the trap which he set for himself, he declares that there is no way out of it. This while consciousness lasts renders impossible all knowledge of that ultimate reality in which subject and object are united.

Indeed, such fallacies make knowledge impossible.

But, then, what is the Ultimate Reality in which subject and object are united? Why, there is no "ultimate" reality. Reality is either real or it is not real, there are no degrees of a more or less ultimate reality. Can there be anything realer than real?

Reality is that which exists. This is a broad and general statement, and from general statements you cannot expect detailed explanations. If you wish to know what characteristics reality possesses you must study it in detail and that is exactly what our scientists are doing. If you wish to know the nature of reality go to science, study physics, chemistry, botany, zoölogy, physiology, astronomy, and above all study the propædeutics of science, especially mathematics and logic, the sciences of formal thought. All the results of these sciences are more or less actual knowledge. No science represents the whole of reality; every science investigates one side of nature only, it moves in some one special kind of abstraction. None of them represents in a special degree "the innermost nature" of things, but all of them represent some real actual qualities of nature, and in this sense we might say that every one of them represents the innermost nature of reality. That we know little in comparison to what we wish to know, that in addition to some actual knowledge we propose guesses called hypotheses, and that, however much we shall know, the whole world of reality is so immeasurable and its relations are so infinite that we shall never and can never know it out, is a fact that nobody disputes. But no amount of ignorance (which by the bye is something negative only) justifies Mr. Spencer's agnostic proposition that all knowledge is rendered impossible.

Agnosticism in whatever form it may appear (with the sole exception of the Agnosticism of Modesty which means judgment suspended so long as sufficient evidence is missing) is throughout the outcome of some erroneous reasoning. The faults of a lens appear on the picture in the camera, and if no other information can be had, are indistinguishable from the objects pictured. So agnosticism is the confusion of the thoughts of a thinker taken by him to be the objective reality of the world mirrored in his thoughts. P. C.

CURRENT TOPICS.

THERE is a story travelling round by the newspaper line, and probably false, to the effect that the President of the United States is about to send an autograph letter of congratulation to the German Emperor thanking him for admitting the American pig into Germany. According to the story, a man-of-war ship will be specially appointed to carry the letter, thus giving it a sort of regal and imperial dignity; which it would not have if simply dropped into the post office, or even entrusted to the American Minister at Berlin. The President, say the newspapers, is anxious to thank the Emperor, "for an act of such signal importance to the entire West, and in particular to the great pork industries of Chicago." And, a member of the cabinet, name not given, is quoted as saying, "The elections West are near at hand, and the President wishes to accentuate his success for the farming community in practically opening the European markets to a great product." The "man-of-war" part of it gives a brackish flavor to the story, and makes it look like a yarn prepared exclusively for the marines. Such a letter would be diplomatically dangerous, and it might provoke the Emperor to write in reply, "Go thou and do likewise." To thank the Germans for doing what we refuse to do, would be to stultify ourselves for nothing. The President knows enough to let well enough alone. We may congratulate whomsoever it may concern that the Germans have opened their gates to our swine, but for all that, we shall continue to maintain a jealous barrier against the pigs and pork of Germany.

* * *

Vicarious atonement is no longer a theory, but a condition, at least in the state of Maine. In that commonwealth the prohibitory liquor law is vigorously enforced, and vigorously evaded. It has lately been discovered that in some parts of that state men can be hired for two dollars a day to expiate the sins of others, by acting as dummy saloon keepers in those very dry neighborhoods where the prohibitory law actually prohibits. The duty of a dummy substitute is to stand at a window, and by touching an electric button notify the real proprietor whether an approaching customer is genuine or counterfeit, an orthodox disciple of St Bacchus, or a spy. This duty requires that a dummy possess intuitive perceptions keen and true as those of a pointer dog It is also the duty of the dummy, when the police make a raid on the saloon, to represent himself as the proprietor, and go to prison without grumbling, thus making a vacancy for another scapegoat, who will hold the position until the old one returns from the wilderness, which in this case means the jail. This kind of atonement is not unusual in the world, but it is ruinously cheap when furnished for two dollars a day; although during the war, many a man died for his country by means of a substitute costing less than five hundred dollars. I once knew a soldier to falsely accuse himself of stealing from the sutler, and take his punishment like a man, the real culprit paying him for so doing a plug of tobacco down, and promising him five dollars in money "after pay day," a time indefinite as the farmer's "after harvest." I regret to say that when pay day came the latter part of the bargain was repudiated on the ground that it was against good morals and contrary to public policy. The expiator complained to me about it, but I could only advise him never to expiate in future except for cash.

* * *

We are a hero-worshipping people, but we like our heroes dead; for example General Grant. The statue of him was unveiled a few days ago in Chicago, and the ceremony of unveiling it caused the most popular and populous demonstration ever seen in the city. For hours, military and civic societies marched through the streets in high procession on their way to offer incense to the statue, while enthusiastic citizens rallied by swarms around the monument to assist in the ceremony. Of this cheering multitude of worshippers tens of thousands had censured General Grant in

his lifetime as a man worthy of utter detestation, a corrupt magistrate, and a Cæsar meditating the overthrow of liberty. At the unveiling ceremonies those very same unrelenting critics bowed before his graven image in reverent adoration. Shall it become a precept of American party spirit, that we speak nothing but good of the dead, and nothing but evil of the living?

* * *

Speaking of soldiers, and effigies, and images, reminds me of this newspaper paragraph which I had nearly forgotten, "Skirmish shooting was the order of the day at Fort Sheridan yesterday. The skirmish is a novel feature, in which a dozen scouts advance towards dummy Indians and fire off hand. The scores were good, two contestants making 130 points out of a possible 200." This kind of skirmish drill amounts to something; it has a stimulus in it almost equal to the taste of blood. There is a martial humor about it which is nowhere to be found in the dull sport of shooting at a blank target which even when you hit it, gives back no suggestion of death nor portent of a broken bone. I agree that "the scores were good"; 130 Indians for 200 shots appears to be extremely good; but I account for the victory by this good luck that the dummy Indians had no guns in their hands, and could not fire back. I am confirmed in this opinion by the fact that in actual fighting our soldiers never get 130 Indians out of a possible 200; although the Indians have been known to do much better than that, and even to get 700 soldiers, out of a possible 700, a record which has not been broken yet. Of course as a matter of taste the drilling of soldiers to shoot at dummy Indians is open to criticism; and if we should hear that in Arizona or Dakota the Indians were shooting dummy soldiers by way of practice, we should sadly say that it was a proof of their bloodthirsty disposition, and the evidence would be conclusive; it would prove them to be savages. The deplorable effects of such training on the mind was made visible in that Clark Street tragedy when a dummy Indian had his neck broken by a soldier from the fort. It appears that the soldier being in town, "on pass," as they call it, came under the inspiration of Chicago whiskey, a nectar which in its fine effect upon the imagination has no equal in the world. Passing along the street he saw a dummy Indian in front of a cigar store, and the martial spirit of the soldier was immediately aroused. The Indian, in a friendly way, offered the soldier a bunch of dummy cigars, but the white brave thought it was a tomahawk, and immediately attacked the Indian. He beat him severely about the face, and then after a desperate wrestle flung him heavily to the ground, the Indian's neck being broken in the fall. The soldier was unreasonably fined for his conduct; I say unreasonably, because the punishment ought to have been assessed against his commanding officer, who had taught him to make war on dummy Indians at Fort Sheridan.

* * *

Field Marshal Von Moltke's Third Volume is just published wherein he treats of 1870-71. What he says as a soldier is interesting, but what he says as a statesman is not encouraging, for we feel as if a cannon were talking to us, logical, passionless, and stern. Our sentimental hope of peace through commerce, love, charity, ethics, religion, and all the other gentle agencies vanishes before this hard moralising of the old Field Marshal, "Only the sword holds the sword in the scabbard." If this is true, then it is only its sword and not its cause that gives a nation peace; and Shakespeare was wrong when he said, "Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just"; for, according to Moltke, justice counts for nothing in a quarrel between two nations. Unfortunately, in this matter the soldier is wiser than the poet. The wars of old in comparison to the modern wars were as a skirmish to a battle, for, says Moltke, "Wars to-day draw the whole people to the battle field—hardly a family without its sufferer. The future is almost without hope if the following opinion is correct, "So long as nations maintain separate lives there will be strife which can be settled only with arms." Still more dreary is Moltke's prophecy of relief, "It is to be hoped," he says, "that wars will become less frequent in the degree in which they become more terrible." So, that, until wars make the whole earth a desolation, and "the multitudinous seas incarnadine," there will be no hope for international harmony; and gospels of peace and good will to men must remain a mockery, and a conjurer's jingle of words.

M. M. TRUMBULL.

BOOK REVIEWS.

NATIONAL LIBERAL CLUB. Political Economy Circle. Transactions, Vol. I. Edited by *J. H. Levy*, Honorary Secretary of the Circle. London: P. S. King & Son. 1891.

The Political Economy Circle of the National Liberal Club, of London, resembles in its essential features the Sunset Club of Chicago. At certain times the members dine together; and after dinner, a paper is read on some economic subject by some competent person, perhaps a member of the club, and perhaps not, after which criticisms of the argument are in order. The papers then are carefully edited, and published in book form. The Right Hon. Charles Pelham Villiers, M. P., is President of the club.

The volume of "Transactions" before us contains six addresses, on the following subjects respectively: "The Economic Principles Which Should Guide Legislation With Regard to the Occupation of Land," by the Right Hon. Leonard H. Courtney, M. P., Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons; "International Migration and Political Economy," by J. S. Mann, M. A., of Trinity College, Oxford; "The Report of the Gold and Silver Commission," by Alfred Milnes, M. A.; "The Rate of Interest," by Sidney Webb, LL. B., Lecturer on Political Economy at the City of London College; "Distribution as a Branch of Economics," by J. H. Levy, late Lecturer on Logic and Economics at the Birkbeck Institution; "The Migration of Labor," by Hubert Llewellyn Smith, B. A., Late Scholar of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

The merit of papers like these is, that the writers of them, being limited in time by the rules of the club, are compelled to say as much as possible in the fewest possible words. Books have been written on these themes which do not contain as many ideas and reasons as are condensed into these essays. They are all of them of the highest quality both in matter and style. *μμτ.*

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